

# The american response to the holocaust

War



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The Holocaust is considered as one of the most violent and controversial events in the history of the world. This was a time which showed the devastating oppression and persecution of the Jewish people. Because of it, the United States of America was forced to take drastic measures against the Nazi Regime. Nevertheless, the expected response coming from the U. S. was futile. It is very interesting to analyze as to the reasons behind the events during that time, especially with how the United States of America responded.

The Holocaust is described as the “ systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008). The word “ Holocaust” originated from a Greek word, which means “ sacrifice by fire. ” In January 1933, the Nazis hold authority in Germany. They believed that the Germans belong to a superior race and the Jews are believed to be inferior as compared to them. The Jews are also perceived as a threat to the German race, which is the reason the Nazi regime ordered the annihilation of the Jews.

The German also attacked other groups that they deemed as racially inferior like the gypsies, disabled, and some Slavic people. Moreover, other groups were also targeted due to ideological and behavioral reasons such as the Communists, Socialists, and even homosexuals (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008). During the Second World War, the United States of America did not even attempt to rescue the Jews and other victims of the holocaust as this was not included in their list of priorities.

Even the people responsible in the policy making process of the allied forces also did not know how would they be able to implement a rescue operations for these victims. The difficulties in aiding for these people are largely due to the problem of obtaining visas for them to the United States.

The ideas of anti-semitism or the prejudice against Jews, isolationism, xenophobia or the fear of foreigners as well as the situation of economicdepressionand the refugee policy of the U. S. State Department led by Cordell Hull made the entry of refugees in the country very problematic (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008. The U. S. immigrationpolicy indeed had an adverse effect in rescuing the people under the German atrocities and this is clearly seen in the incident of the S. S. St. Louis.

When St. Louis sails from Hamburg to Havana, there were 937 Jewish refugees on board who were trying to escape the German persecution. Each refugee has a valid visa that would allow them to enter Cuba temporarily.

However, as the boat arrived in Havana the Cuban government announced that the visas were invalid and prohibited their entry into the country. Negotiations were made with the Cuban government as well as with the U. S. government to allow the refugees to enter their countries but these did not succeed. The boat stayed for 12 days in the port of Havana and then in Miami afterwards it was forced to return to Europe. As a consequence majority of the passengers died in the duration of the war (Glazer, 2006).

The Roosevelt administration also did not do much efforts to aid the victims as well as the refugees of the Nazi because they deemed that the best

means to save these people is by winning the war against Germany as quickly as possible. It was only when the refugee problem was worsening that President Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board, an independent agency that has the responsibility of saving the Nazi's civilian victims. However, the agency rescued refugees coming from the free zones instead of the territories invaded by the Nazis (Glazer, 2006).

In the spring of 1944, the Allied governments were already aware of the massive gassings that are taking place in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Jewish leaders have already begged the U. S. government to destroy the gas chambers as well as the railways towards the camp. Instead, the U. S. air force bombs the Auschwitz-Monowitz industrial complex that is five miles away from the gas chamber. The reason behind such decision is due to the fact that not bombing the gas chamber and the railways leading to it was part of the United States' wartime policy (Glazer, 2006).

Basically, rescuing the victims of the holocaust especially the Jewish population is highly dependent in the wartime policy of the U. S. It is just unfortunate that rescue operations are not a priority in their policy. There have been efforts coming from the American Jewish community to save their fellow Jews who were being persecuted but they, were afraid that this would result in a stronger feeling of domestic anti-semitism and jeopardizing their relationship with the Roosevelt administration.

The lack of interest of the U. S. government in rescuing the victims of the holocaust is the primary reasons such efforts only fell on deaf ears (Glazer, 2006).

## References

Glazer, S. D. (2006). Winning the War. Retrieved July 5, 2008, from [http://myjewishlearning.com/history\\_community/Modern/Overview\\_The\\_Story\\_19141948/The\\_Holocaust/AmericaResponds.htm](http://myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Modern/Overview_The_Story_19141948/The_Holocaust/AmericaResponds.htm).

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